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FULBRIGHT URGES CONGRESS INQUIRY INTO WAR POLICY

Assails Handling of Tonkin Incident—William Bundy Defends 1964 Decision

By PETER GROSE

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 —

Sen. J. W. Fulbright called today for a Congressional investigation of the Administration's policy on the Vietnam war. He expressed dismay at the process through which the Johnson Administration had reached crucial war decisions.

Speaking for the Administration, Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy defended actions taken during the Gulf of Tonkin crisis of 1964. Senator Fulbright had strongly criticized the decisions that led to these moves.

The two men appeared on separate television programs—Senator Fulbright on the American Broadcasting Company's program "Issues and Answers," Mr. Bundy on the National Broadcasting Company's "Meet the Press."

Each man was then given the opportunity in telephone interviews to comment further in the light of what the other had said.

Calls Attacks Unprovoked

Mr. Bundy insisted that the attacks by North Vietnamese patrol boats on two American intelligence-gathering destroyers on Aug. 4, 1964, were unprovoked. The mission of the two ships was "fully disclosed" to Congress during the debate immediately following the attacks, he said.

Finally, Mr. Bundy said the subsequent Congressional resolution authorizing the President to intensify the war effort had been "worked out in consultation" between the White House and Congress.

Senator Fulbright, an Arkansas Democrat who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, challenged each of these points. The movements of the destroyers, the Maddox and Turner Joy, were provocative, he said, he flatly denied that their mission of visual and electronic reconnaissance had been disclosed to Congress.

Denies Consultation

And asked about Mr. Bundy's statement that the Congressional resolution had come up after the White House had consulted with Congress, he said, "No, this isn't so; they did not."

Senator Fulbright said the resolution in 1964, which he had endorsed on the Senate floor, had been introduced "under a completely false idea of what had happened." The views he expressed in support of the resolution "were based upon information which was not true," he said.

"I very much resent it being thrown back in my face," he said. "The Administration has used this resolution to stop debate, to stop questioning about it for three years."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday released a transcript of hearings, at which

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara was a witness, that it conducted last week on the Gulf of Tonkin confrontation, which led to the start of the bombing of North Vietnam.

"The response was not commensurate with the provocation," Senator Fulbright said. The hearings, he said, "raise a very question about the adequacy of the decision."

"What I was getting at in this committee," he went on, "was to examine the decision making process of this great country. This decision to go to war and then to bring the resolution to Congress was based on inadequate evidence and conflicting reports."

Asks Policy Study

Asked about reports that President Johnson may soon ask to send additional troops to Vietnam, Senator Fulbright said: "I would like to see a full-scale discussion of this by the Congress and by my committee, the re-examination of the purposes, the objectives of our policy in Vietnam. I think the country deserves it."

Without confirming that additional troops may be requested, Mr. Bundy said allied strength in South Vietnam "has got to be adequate to meet a change in the basic strategy" of the North Vietnamese.

"They have sent down a great deal more equipment, a great many more North Vietnamese men, and they have brought the local Vietcong up to concert pitch by bringing in every man they could get into their units," he said. This is what you are faced with."

The South Vietnamese President, Nguyen Van Thieu, agreed with the general lines of this analysis as he was interviewed on the Columbia Broadcasting System's program "Face the Nation."

He was asked about the rest of two prominent politicians opposed to his Government in Saigon.

"We have just protected them against any kidnapping from the Vietcong," President Thieu said.

Senator Fulbright called the arrests "a sign of the worst kind of military dictatorship." He called Mr. Thieu's explanation for the arrests "ridiculous, almost laughable."